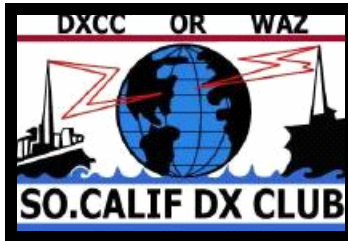


THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA DX CLUB INC

Since 1947



www.scdxc.org

April 2006

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The Southern California DX Club April 2006

I would like to thank Harv for his years as a board member and as recent bulletin editor. The bulletin has been a joy for a long time. We will miss his write ups. Harv said it was time to quit and rest a while.

I have volunteered for at least temporarily to do the newsletter. It will be simple and unless I get some stuff to print it will also be short.

So send me some DX stuff that might be of interest to the members, like pictures of you and your station or the exotic places you operated from. How about DX (bicycle mobile).

73 Steve



The Prez says.....



It has been crazy at Bubba's house and we are getting ready for a very busy April. We start with our youngest Grandson's 2nd Birthday and my Father-in-law's 95th Birthday.

Then the wait for the 15th and arrival of Andy, EU7SA, and his Lovely wife Larisa, EU7BBL. They will be guests in our home for a two week stay in the United States. This will be Larisa's first visit to America and she is very excited and wants to see everything. Bob, N6OX, and I will do our best to make their visit a special one and their dreams come true. We will do a lot of sightseeing and of course Visalia. They will return to Belarus on April 29th.

I am also looking forward to meeting Edwin, ZS6BBO, from South Africa. He will be staying with his brother just over the hill from me, so I hope to do some visiting with him too. Elvin, JA3CZY will not make Southern California this trip but will be attending the DX Conventions and visiting his many friends.

I am also glad Janie, K6ZPL is finally on the mend and feeling better, She is looking forward to all the company....family and friends.

To all.....good luck in the drawings and Happy Convention. See you in Visalia!

Bob, W6ZPL

SECRETARYS CORNER

April 2006



The meeting in March and what a meeting it was, PETER ONE by one who was there. Bob, N6OX, gave us a break down and the story behind the pictures that were posted on the web. Not the official version but very impressive. I still can't imagine the trials these guys went through. Snow, the cold, the cold, the cold...and last but not least... the cold. That comes from Bob himself, even his Russian hat didn't help.

Many people worked Peter One and I think Rich worked em every where. So did Ernie and Larry. Did I forget some one? Oh Well.
There is not much to talk about even though we have not had a bulletin since Dec.

The DX Convention is in full swing and now in the final days of preparation. In addition to The San Diego and Central Arizona Club we have the DXXE group from Mexico to help this year. SEE YOU THERE!



April 21, 22, 23
www.dxconvention.org

The Southern California DX Club April 2006

Who We Are

The SCDXC Newsletter is published monthly by the Southern California DX Club and is e-mailed to all club members.

Please notify the editor if you do not receive your newsletter, have a change of address, or have found an error.

Please direct all submissions to the editor.

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Club Repeater: W6AM/R
145.48 MHz, 100 Hz PL
Club Web Site:
www.scdxc.org

Editor:
Stephen Shane W6NRQ
2224 Wildflower Ave.
Hemet, Ca 92545

E-mail: w6nrq@scdxc.org
951-766-5226



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TEST YOUR TRIVIA

Which countries share the SS call sign?

- | | |
|-----|-------------------|
| (1) | Poland and Sweden |
| (2) | Egypt and Sudan |
| (3) | Egypt and Poland |
| (4) | Sweden and Sudan |

See answer on page 8

Son of the packrat

By Ken Neubeck, WB2AMU source World Radio

Sooner or later, every Ham comes to the realization of what they are and how they fit into the hobby. Some may realize that they are diehard DX or contest operators while others are into things like packet radio or VHF work. I cannot deny the fact that I am a packrat. Actually, I am the son of a packrat and I merely inherited those packrat traits. Being a packrat is not a character trait you can control, it is something that was always meant to be. Packrats are born and not made. As they say, you can't change the spots on a leopard; well, the same thing applies to being a packrat. You cannot change what you are.

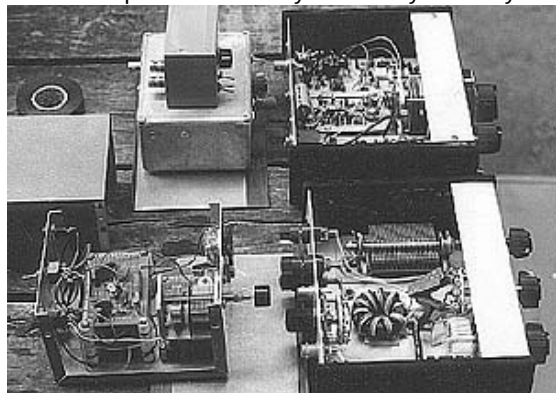
There are two types of people in the world: those who throw junk out and those who collect it. The latter group is affectionately known as the packrats or unaffectionately known as junk collectors. The packrat behavior is particularly highlighted in the Ham radio hobby because of high visibility type events such as flea markets. The early roots of the hobby steeped with the accomplishments of the experimenters who homebrew much of their equipment by scrounging parts. Packrat behavior was originally a major attribute of the Ham personality.



I grew up in a natural packrat environment where my father, Ray, W2ZUN, had the basement filled with all kinds of gadgets and radio equipment along with spare parts. The basement featured a number of Command set surplus radios converted for Amateur Radio use. There were parts everywhere along with piles of data books and schematics. My father had this excellent knack of understanding how each electronic component worked and was tinkering with electronics since his teenage years. Growing up, I thought it was natural to have a basement filled with radio parts. My father had a number of packrat friends whom we visited such as Van, W2OQI, who probably had every radio or homebrew design ever built at one time in his basement. The word museum seems appropriate to describe this.

The packrat curse did not bite me right away. When I got my Novice license in 1971, I originally got in the hobby in order to make contacts and exchange QSL cards. My first setup was a packrat's delight, however, as I used a surplus command set transmitter pushing out twenty watts and a timeless HRO receiver for 80 and 40 Meter operation. I occasionally built some matching coils and tuners but did not stray much beyond that.

Part of the packrat mentality was that you built your own equipment rather than buy it. Sometimes this philosophy could be expanded to where you could be allowed to buy used gear and work on restoring it into working condition. But to buy new equipment? This went against the grain of being a packrat. However, even this mentality could be taken to the point of being very ridiculous. I have seen people struggle to use really out-of-place equipment to go on some bands rather than shell out a few hundred dollars for something halfway decent. These people do have money but they are trapped in a philosophy that transcends the average packrat. There is the case of a packrat on Long Island who goes scrounging at 5 a.m. through the garbage left on the curb for pickup. This guy found a printer but no manual, so of course he knocked on the owner's door at 5 a.m. to a chorus of profanity that was captured on the packrat's radio which was an open mike on the local repeater!



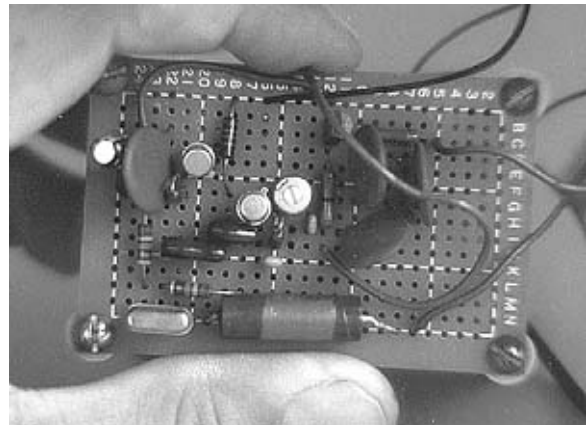
Most packrats are a little bit more balanced than this as they will buy new equipment on occasion, but they still get the biggest thrill out of making a pile of random parts from the junk box work in a circuit. Many of the avid QRP operators are also packrats since the two philosophies overlap. You really can't be a true QRP operator if you have not built a QRP rig from scratch - operating a commercial rig at QRP power with a Bird wattmeter is not in the true spirit of a diehard QRPer! There is one line most packrats will not cross, and unless they really have to, they will not buy commercially made antennas. They will generally build their own antennas using whatever material they have on hand in accordance with handbook calculations.

The packrat's Nirvana is the flea market. It's here where he meets his fellow packrats and they compete to find the best bargain on anything related to radio. One will notice after attending a few flea markets that the heaviest trading occurs at the beginning and at the very end of the flea market. When a car or truck pulls in loaded with stuff, there will be at least a half a dozen packrats waiting to make bids on a desired piece of gear before it even gets out of the vehicle! I remember one flea market where my partner sold over \$200 worth of stuff before any of it was unloaded from the van! Then things slow down during the middle of the flea market until the end when people are selling at incredible bargains so that they don't have to take the stuff home! Often, someone will leave a pile of stuff on the ground when they leave so that a whole group of packrats will scream, "Free stuff!" and pick out goodies for nothing. The conflicts between buyers and sellers are the things that legends are made of in packrat lore.

Of course, the ultimate Amateur Radio flea market is the Dayton Hamvention. I finally had the fortune to visit it in 1998 with my father, fulfilling a life-long dream. The sheer size of Dayton is mind boggling when seeing it the first time. Hams pack the hotels as much as 40 miles away for the three day event. Many a packrat's heartbeat has increased just from the mere mention of the word "Dayton."

the road to becoming a full fledged packrat may vary among different individuals. In my case, I really did not get into the building aspect of the hobby and take full advantage of radio flea markets in my early Ham days until I joined an electronic company in 1987. Prior to that I worked a number of years for an aircraft company. All of a sudden, I had to get smart in electronics as part of my job and took a number of electronic courses. This gave me the push into building simple devices for musical instruments and QRP transmitters for Amateur Radio

This gave me the push towards getting my Extra class license in 1988. Access to parts was excellent as many junk parts were available not only in the trash bins of my company, but also in the dumpsters of adjacent companies in the industrial park where I worked.



It was in this company that I met the undisputed King of the Pack Rats, Fred Franke, WB2NFO. If you needed a part as well as a description, he was sure to have it somewhere in his basement as well as knowing everything about it. He spent so much time at flea markets and looking for junk parts, he had no time to get on the air. One of the biggest hauls we were involved with was when a hybrid manufacturer moved out of the industrial park and left behind all sorts of switches, transistors, Bud boxes and circuit boards. The feeling was similar to that of the buccaneers looting a cargo ship in the Caribbean. It was a full week of ecstasy for us when searching after work to find new goodies. I even made a few bucks selling some transistors and capacitors to a surplus parts supplier.

As stated before, packrats are born and not made. Sometimes it may take a few years for the urge to collect parts to build something shows up. The metamorphosis is similar to Lon Channey changing into a werewolf. The packrat will find himself taking out circuit boards from electrical appliances in the junk bin for the purpose of pulling out a certain value resistor. A good packrat will reach a point where he will not have to buy any new resistors, capacitors, switches and transistors. All he may have to buy is an occasional microcircuit. You won't see many packrats using many store-bought parts on their projects. Part of the fun is pulling off old parts from junk boards and watching them work in another application as a homebrew project.

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Sadly, the packrat is becoming extinct in the Amateur Radio hobby. You will see less and less parts in junk boxes available at flea markets. It seems people are more geared to selling mostly computer and other appliances. Sometimes after one is so accustomed to having it all in a state-of-the art transceiver, it's nice to make a simple transmitter from scratch that puts out all of maybe two watts. It's hard to beat the feeling of building something yourself and then making contacts on the air with it! I got this feeling when I built an oscillator circuit that later developed into a Two Watt crystal control transmitter and got excellent signal reports from Ohio, Virginia and France. It seems that even in countries where home brewing is a necessity in order to get on the air, there are more commercial rigs finding their way into these places. I would like to see a radio contest where the various participants must use a homemade QRP transmitter for extra points. I think that contests like these might stimulate an aspect of our hobby that is fading and needs a little boost. It is not just an issue of being an appliance operator as much as it is to preserve a spirit of adventure that had been a major part of the hobby in the early days for many years.

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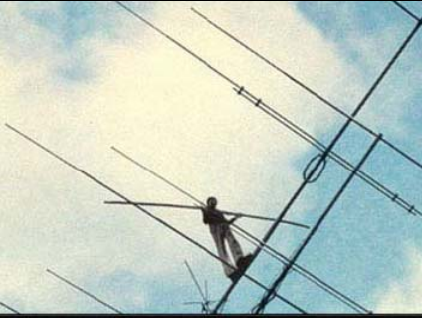
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